Women’s History Month: Xbox Ambassadors Share Their Stories

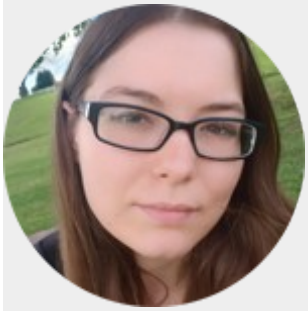
Community Blue Tiger Mar 1, 2021

It’s March, which marks the start of **Women’s History Month**! Highlighting and amplifying community voices is core to the Xbox Ambassadors community. So, in celebration, we asked those who identify as women how games with female representation have impacted them and to share their own stories about being a member of a gaming community.

We received hundreds of responses and, with much consideration, selected the following to share.

Here are their stories:

Moonshade47

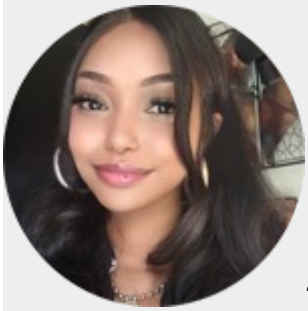


“Growing up as a little girl into gaming and other “boy” things has its challenges. I was always told games were for boys and got mocked and/or harassed pretty frequently. When I discovered Lara Croft… She honestly changed my life.

There she was: a strong, smart, clever, capable woman. Kicking butt and taking names. Leaping around tombs and solving puzzles, killing insane beings. She was even brunette with brown eyes, like me! I loved her, and she became a role model for me and my best friend. Lara showed me that women can be more than just some side character. They can be the hero. As a little girl, Lara gave me the confidence to not be scared to be involved in “boy” stuff.

So here I am today, gaming, hunting, fishing, lifting, learning karate, shooting guns, and doing all the other things they told me girls couldn’t and shouldn’t do. I really believe Lara Croft gave little me the confidence I needed to say “screw those boys, I can do it too! Maybe even better!”

OofBunny



“To start – Senua from Hellblade: Senua’s Sacrifice. I have replayed this game quite a bit and I think about the story constantly, Senua inspires me so much because she manages to be strong yet fragile in a believable way, and the entire plot feels like an excellent example of a story that manages to focus on a woman’s mental trauma without it ever feeling gratuitous or exploitative, and for similar reasons I also like Alice from Alice: Madness Returns and Fran Bow from her titular game.

As for more upbeat characters I also love April Ryan from Dreamfall, Aloy from Horizon: Zero Dawn and Kate Walker from the Syberia series, but my favorite character is Lara Croft, because Tomb Raider: Legend was the first game that really got me into gaming due to having such a fun and strong heroine that managed to have a great deal of depth whilst still being fun!”

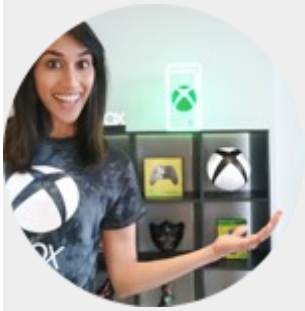
FaythsRequiem

“Having representation in games matters; feeling as you’re important, that your voice is heard and your story has value matters.

I remember being in grade school when Metroid came out and the sheer awe and wonder I felt in the discovery that Samus was a woman. A woman, who held her own and didn’t need some man to save her because she could save herself, as well as save everyone else.

For a girl like me, Samus was a shining beacon that showed anyone, regardless of gender, could be a warrior and a hero.”

MissDeusGeek



“Playing games with leading characters that identify as women was a big step in normalising, in my mind, the fact that women could do and achieve all that was traditionally reserved for men.

When I was very young and exposed to games where the leading characters were male, I had always wanted to roleplay as those male characters when playing ‘pretend’ and would always try to imitate them, whether it was the way I dressed or spoke. They were the ‘cool’ ones. Whereas women were the damsels in distress, something that never appealed to me.

Then came Tomb Raider. Lara Croft had a huge impact on me. Here was a woman doing everything I once thought only men could do. She fought bad guys with her bare hands, she had guns, she literally raided tombs and was the epitome of being ‘badass’. It was from then on that I started to really notice the plethora of women in video games who weren’t just side-characters.

This almost did a 180 on me as a whole and the way I perceived myself as well. I started to realise that men weren’t the only ones who could be strong

leaders and it led to a big part of me wanting to join the police force after high school.

My gender was no longer a limitation in my mind. Of course, I ended up not joining the police force and went to University instead, but the fact remains. Characters who identified as women in video games gave me the power to believe in myself and believe that if I set my mind to it, I could achieve anything. Gender was no barrier."

Lliandra

"I've played games all my life – I'm 38 this year. I've always grown up with boys being the main focus of games, antagonists and protagonists alike, but it's never really affected how I've quantified my gender in real life.

I've sought opportunities where I can and, in fact, being one of the only females in my social circles to play games way back in the beginning, definitely gave me an edge. I just wanted to be the best, but getting kudos for being "a girl" when playing games certainly drove me.

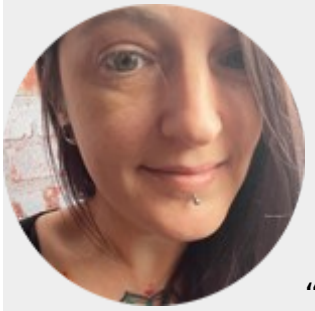
Yes, I experienced misogyny and sexism but I knew it couldn't hurt me, because I knew I was good and it was getting to them ☺ My main 'arena' was Counter Strike (talking 1.6 days here!) and I was a part of 4Kings Gaming back in the day. Whilst I didn't agree with being on a 'girls squad' I could see that the skill gap between us and the guys was too great for us to be part of the main team.

Looking back, I think it was due to us not having as many opportunities to train and be encouraged. Ultimately the female squad fell apart, as did the squads for other well known teams, but I see some are still around today.

I think I'm saying, in my own roundabout way, is that we need to be given the SAME opportunities and attention as the guys, but doing it separately won't help things. We need to train WITH the guys and be encouraged the same as guys, otherwise we'll just be seen as "girl gamers" instead of "gamers."

I missed my shot with esports by being born just a bit too early, but I'd like to encourage younger players to get involved and don't let gender be a barrier. If you're good, own it!"

Pandy Yato



"When I was a young girl, a lot of the time women were portrayed as the Princess or as someone who perhaps needed saving or was the love interest of another character, I never wanted to be the Princess and never felt like I needed saving so the first time I played Metroid Prime and we discovered Samus Aran was a woman, my young mind was amazed. Here was a woman who was strong, powerful and didn't have someone saving her, I wanted to be like Samus and take on the universe my own way."

I Lupercalia I

"I almost exclusively play female characters because I like feeling represented or able to portray myself in a manner I wish that I could in real life. In terms of stories; I met a partner on Smite in an online match back when I was still new, and had around that time I was in a very dark place mentally.

We found each other and were two sides of the same coin; an amab [assigned male at birth] who identified much more as a woman and an afab [assigned female at birth] who identified more as a man. They introduced me to and helped guide me through gender roles and identity and together we worked ourselves through issues.

We would spend hours on Destiny in the Ishtar Commons, sitting upon the traffic light close to the left of the entrance, just sitting and watching the

factions fight each other around the ship as we discussed things that captured us.

It taught me a lot about myself and to accept who I am. Despite having broken up 3 or 4 years ago now, I still go back to that light sometimes and sit down in our spot, reminiscing about those days. They made me more confident in my feminine side and I will always love them for that.”

BlondiebutGeeky

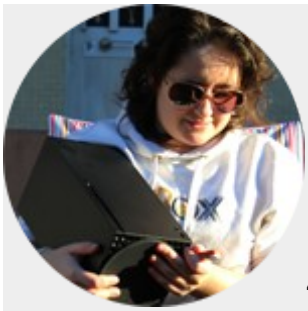
“The woman character I identify most with in video games is: Anya Stroud (Gears of War) When she first entered the COG, behind the scenes, she was the eyes and ears of the Delta team. With that, she earned the respect and later donned the armor and became a crucial part of the Delta Squad.

Through her decisions, friendships and the things she witnessed, earned her a role as one of the most iconic women leads in a video games. Bright and could hold her own, she was also known as the comforting and reliable source for others.

A female that earned the admiration of those around her. Paving the way for female characters, her legacy continues. She gave us hope. “We’ve finally got a tomorrow” Anya Stroud.

The ways she has impacted me: I would say I relate highly with the Anya, being behind the scenes, and making a lasting positive impact. Remembering to stay in the fight, make the right calls, listen, and earn respect. Do not forget to dream. Believe in yourself! Give hope!”

CATpt93TAC



“I wish I could go on and tell a wonderful story about how games with female characters made me feel more valued in this world, but I just don’t recall feeling all the amazing characters out there impacted me deeply. Nor do I recall feeling less for seeing male protagonists.

As a feminist, I believe in a world where we can all have equal rights, and that includes loving characters for their personality, not for their gender. There are stories I love in all kinds of games, and I never truly looked at genders to appreciate them. Though Master Chief is the protagonist of most Halo games, I had Cortana close to me all the time, without ever feeling she was sexualized. Maybe I was lucky with the games I got to know, where developers just deliver strong characters regardless of sex. And that’s what I truly seek.

Some of my favorite characters are women, indeed, like Dr. Halsey, Cortana, Foe Hammer, Miranda Keys, AI Isabel. But I also adore Captain Keys, The Arbiter, Sgt Johnson. (Is it obvious I love Halo?) Even Gears of War has a strong female presence with Kait, Queen Myrrah, Anya, or even the Matriarch! Halo 5 had a female Elite, a touch I loved. Linda and Kelly are there, as well as Tanaka and Vale.

I’ve never played games like Tomb Raider, probably one of the most iconic female characters, and even though I love playing as Rico Rodriguez in Just Cause, there are strong female protagonists that are respected for their worth as people, and not seen as objects by men.

Child of Light, Life is Strange, Tell Me Why, Control, The Medium, there are loads of incredible games with strong female leads, and I guess I have to thank the gaming developers for being incredible in their way to tell stories, not looking at how these people were born, but on what they’ve become, and the incredible legacy each one left.

In what comes to gaming development, I’d say there isn’t that much to build, apart from some that still portrait women as sexual objects, inferior or princesses that need to be saved. But overall, that has been the rarity, and maybe without realizing, that’s why I never felt the need to be represented as a woman. Besides, I don’t actually look for that in gaming.

I love good fun and great stories, but also support and love when people feel represented, and I understand why that matters. For example, Allison’s panic attack on Tell Me Why meant a lot more to me than female representation.

There are subjects that are still not approached as they should, and I believe women are represented in a varied and beautiful way in games, remembering us gamers that what matters is character, not gender. <3”

Thank you once again to everyone for sharing their stories this Women’s History Month! We understand it is not always easy to share personal experiences publicly, so we really do appreciate every single one.